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Term Limits and Minimum Wage Make Ballot More Counting for Casinos, More Court for Issue 1

Counties will receive the official Arkansas ballot this week, even though the Arkansas Secretary of State continues to count signatures for a proposed casino ballot issue.

Aug. 23 is the state deadline for counties to receive wording for the November General Election ballot. County election commissions are in a rush to program electronic voting machines or order copies of paper ballots, depending on what type of voting equipment they use. Like in past years, the slate of ballot issues will be included even though signature counting may not be over in Little Rock.

Supporters with Driving Arkansas Forward and the Arkansas Jobs Coalition turned in more than 43,000 additional voter signatures Tuesday in an attempt to qualify the casino issue for the ballot. They received additional time to collect more signatures after their initial submission fell short of the required 84,859 signatures.

What Qualified?

This time last month, three ballot issue campaigns turned in hundreds of thousands of voter signatures for employees at the Secretary of State's Office to comb through and decide whether they were valid.

The Arkansas Term Limits Amendment qualified first and will be [Issue 3](#).

Next up, An Act to Increase the Arkansas Minimum Wage. Because this is a proposed state law, it will appear after the constitutional amendments. The proposal will be [Issue 5](#).

Casinos and Pope County

That leaves the Issue 4 slot for casinos.

"I think they can get it done pretty quick," attorney Alex Gray said about the state counting signatures turned in today for the casino proposal.

They're confident they'll make the ballot as Issue 4. Commercials are already airing on television advertising the proposed constitutional amendment as Issue 4.

The proposed amendment seeks to legalize casino gaming at Oaklawn and Southland race parks, and at one location in Jefferson County and Pope County.

Pope County's clerk has also been counting signatures for a local ballot issue related to the casino amendment.

Citizens For A Better Pope County are seeking to prohibit the county judge and quorum court from issuing a letter of support for a casino applicant without approval from voters in a separate election. They turned in enough voter signatures to qualify their local measure for the same ballot.

The Pope County Quorum Court and the Russellville City Council also passed resolutions asking their top local government official not to sign a letter of support if the casino amendment fails in their county. (The proposed amendment would require casino applicants to submit letters of support from their county judge or quorum court if the casino were to locate within the county, or from the mayor if it were to locate within the city.)

No similar efforts are taking place in Jefferson County.

Court Action

[Issue 1](#) will be back in [court](#) this month. A hearing on the proposed amendment from the legislature is set for Aug. 30.

The proposed amendment would limit certain attorney fees and lawsuit damages, and give state legislators more authority over making or changing court rules.

Legislators have the ability to refer up to three constitutional amendments to voters. They referred two proposals for this election cycle:

- [Issue 1](#) - An Amendment Concerning Civil Lawsuits and the Powers of the General Assembly and Supreme Court to Adopt Court Rules
- [Issue 2](#) - A Constitutional Amendment Adding as a Qualification to Vote that a Voter Present Certain Valid Photographic Identification When Casting a Ballot In Person or Casting an Absentee Ballot

The lawsuit says Issue 1 contains too many unrelated issues for a single ballot measure and should be removed from the ballot. The proposal should actually be four separate measures, the lawsuit states. A judge denied a motion to immediately strike the issue and will hear arguments next week in the case *Marion Humphrey v. Mark Martin*.

Issue 1 probably won't be the only ballot issue challenged in court. Randy Zook with the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce said he anticipates challenging the term limits and minimum wage proposals.

"We are scrutinizing the signature process for both proposals," he said. "And considering court suits."

Zook, who is leading opposition groups Arkansans for Common-Sense Term Limits and Arkansans for a Strong Economy, said any court challenges would take place after Labor Day when the Arkansas Supreme Court returns to session.

Get Engaged. Get Informed.

Early voting starts Oct. 22. Election Day is Nov. 6.

The [Public Policy Center](#) has published nonpartisan fact sheets on Arkansas' statewide ballot issues since 2004. We welcome your questions at publicpolicycenter@uaex.edu. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and look for our posts with the hashtag #ARballot.

Looking Forward

Potential Ballot Issues from the Public

The Attorney General is responsible for reviewing the language and titles of potential ballot issues submitted to voters by the public. Ballot issue groups can circulate petitions only after the Attorney General verifies that the ballot title and popular name honestly, intelligibly and fairly describe the purpose of the proposed constitutional amendment or act. The following are recent Attorney General opinions regarding potential ballot issues:

Rejected Ballot Proposals

June 22, 2018 - Arkansas Cannabis Amendment - A proposal seeking to make possession and growth of cannabis for personal use by adults legal under state law was rejected. According to [Opinion No. 2018-076](#), the proposal didn't adequately inform voters that marijuana is illegal under federal law and the ballot title was "partisan" and failed to "provide sufficient information about the choice(s) voters are called upon to make." John Wesley Hall, Jr. of Little Rock submitted the measure.

Ballot Proposals Approved for Signature Gathering

July 25, 2018 - The Arkansas Citizens' Redistricting Amendment - A proposal seeking to change how congressional and state legislative districts are set after the Census was certified for signature gathering, according to [Opinion No. 2018-086](#). Skip Cook of North Little Rock submitted the measure.

Know of a potential ballot issue?

E-mail the information to publicpolicycenter@uaex.edu or call Kristin Higgins at 501-671-2160.

You can find past newsletters and ballot issue fact sheets at

<http://www.uaex.edu/ballot>



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- Increase citizen knowledge, awareness and understanding of public issues;
- Enhance public participation in decisions regarding public issues, and
- Help citizens craft, evaluate and implement alternative solutions to public issues.

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